

Majority Message



In Search Of An Agenda

Maybe Together, Democrats Will Do Better Today

Senate Democrats Are Meeting Today—Once Again—To Try To Find An Agenda.

“Democratic Members will huddle at 12:30 p.m. in the Lyndon B. Johnson room in what’s being billed to Senators as a ‘long-term planning’ session for the Caucus. ... [Sources] said it will include talks about scheduling, strategies and the key Democratic initiatives of an election-year agenda. ... Other sources said lawmakers will also talk about the party platform ... ‘Senators are going to be given an update and then participate in a discussion on how and when to roll [the agenda] out,’ one senior Democratic aide said of Wednesday’s Caucus.” (Erin Billings, “Reid Eyes Long-Term Plan,” *Roll Call*, 3/7/06)

For The Minority, Rolling Out Ideas Or Proposals Has Been Surprisingly Tricky.

“Democratic leaders had set a goal of issuing their legislative manifesto by November 2005 to give voters a full year to digest their proposals. But some Democrats protested that the release date was too early, so they put it off until January. The new date slipped twice again ... Some Democrats fear that the hesitant handling is symbolic of larger problems facing the party in trying to seize control of the House and Senate after more than a decade of almost unbroken minority status.” (Shailagh Murray and Charles Babington, “Democrats Struggle To Seize Opportunity,” *The Washington Post*, 3/7/06)

For Months, Democrats Have Searched Unsuccessfully For A Common Agenda

September 2005: Democrats “Still Sorting Out ... The Overarching Message

Theme.” “Senate Democrats have identified five issue areas on which they will campaign next year, but are still sorting out who will spearhead each issue and what the overarching message theme will be.” (Emily Pierce and Paul Kane, “Senate Democrats To Focus On ‘Strength,’” *Roll Call*, 9/22/05)

October 2005: Democrats Claim To Be “Putting The Finishing Touches” On Their Agenda.

“House Democrats are privately planning to accelerate the timing of the release of their platform and the major policies they will promote on the campaign trail next year. Key Democratic sources say Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other House leaders are putting the finishing touches on what arguably will be Democrats most detailed ‘positive’ election-year agenda since the party lost power more than a decade ago.” (Erin P. Billings, “Democrats Eye Agenda For ‘06,” *Roll Call*, 10/11/06)

✓ “Democrats Plan To Unveil Their 2006 Party Platform In The Coming Weeks...”

(Josephine Hearn, “Dems Test New Slogan,” *The Hill*, 10/25/05)

November 2005: Democrats Decide To “Punt” On Rolling Out An Agenda Until A Later Date.

“National Democratic Party leaders have decided to punt on rolling out their

2006 agenda until next year, and will in part fill the time slot with a unity rally this Thursday to highlight fractures in the Republican camp and show why their party should be back in charge.” (Erin P. Billings, “Democratic Agenda Off For 2005,” *Roll Call*, 11/8/05)

✓ **“It Remains Unclear Exactly When Democrats Will Launch Their 2006 Agenda...”** (Erin P. Billings, “Democratic Agenda Off For 2005,” *Roll Call*, 11/8/05)

✓ **“Forces Within The Party Have Been Pressing For Democrats To Outline Specifics About What They Would Do In Power...”** (Erin P. Billings, “Democratic Agenda Off For 2005,” *Roll Call*, 11/8/05)

December 2005: Democrats’ Agenda “Delayed” By “Tactical” Considerations.

“Democrats have their own challenges – notably, coalescing around a campaign agenda, which was widely expected to be released in January but has been delayed. ‘We don’t feel any rush to do it,’ Ms. Pelosi said. She insisted that the decision was tactical...” (Robin Toner and Carl Hulse, “Battle For Congress Looms...” *The New York Times*, 12/24/05)

January 2006: “Don’t Expect The Democrats’ Broader Message To Emerge Anytime Soon.”

“Don’t expect the Democrats’ broader message to emerge anytime soon, however. The public rollout has been pushed back and no hard launch date has been chosen, says a Democratic strategist familiar with the deliberations.” (Chris Cillizza, “Dean Answers With A New Money Man,” *The Washington Post*, 1/15/06)

✓ **Late January: Democrats Tried Rolling Out An Agenda, But *The New York Times* Dismissively Called It “Short On Specifics.”** “Congressional Democrats, eager to pick up seats in November but so far unable to capitalize on Republicans’ vulnerability, fired back on Thursday, offering a sweeping agenda that was long on vision and short on specifics.” (Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Democrats Outline Agenda, Mostly Sparing The Specifics,” *The New York Times*, 1/27/06)

February 2006: Democrats “Recalibrating” And “Reconsidering” Whatever Message They Launched In January.

“Democratic sources said the party leadership ... has not yet signed off on the timing and packaging of the ideas they will present to the electorate. ... ‘I think we are recalibrating,’ said one senior House Democratic staffer. ‘We are reconsidering the strategy. It’s not clear that we have to go out with a bold, comprehensive package.’” (Erin Billings, “Democrats ‘Recalibrating’ Message Strategy,” *Roll Call*, 2/6/06)

March 2006: Democrats “Still Determining” Their Agenda Strategy.

“Some within the Democratic Party leadership have suggested that the party roll out the agenda incrementally over time, culminating in a package of ideas later in the year. Others, however, believe it would be better to present the platform all at once — perhaps sometime this spring. A knowledgeable Democratic aide said the party is ‘still determining’ how best to showcase its ideas this cycle...” (Erin P. Billings, “Reid Eyes Long-Term Plan,” *Roll Call*, 3/7/06)

✓ **“At The Moment, Democrats Aren’t Even United Over How United They Should Be.”** (Roger Simon, “Bush Perceived Blunders on Iraq, Katrina Buoy Democrats in 2006,” *Bloomberg*, 3/7/06)

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